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THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 2017

Meeting the mayor

New year levee lets citizens have a say.
Page 2.

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Putting their best tippy toes forward



ALLAN BENNER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Welland-Port Colborne Concert Association presented Bengt Jorgen's re-visioned version of Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake for a capacity audience at the Welland Centennial Secondary School auditorium. There are still two concert series shows remaining in the season, including Kyra Millan and Tina Faye on Feb. 26, and Ensemble Vivant on March 25. More information about the concert series is available at www.wellandportcolborneconcert.org.

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LOCAL NEWS

Residents' input helpful to Port councillors

LAURA BARTON
Postmedia Network

Port Colborne opened up its council chambers for its annual new year's levee last Sunday afternoon.

The sun was shining brightly on the first day of 2017, lending itself to the welcoming, casual atmosphere of tables grouped together and coffee and treats for guests.

Mayor John Maloney said he had already spoken to several residents within the first half-hour of the event starting.

"We're here to respond to questions on anything," he said as he drank his own mug of coffee.

The new year's levee, traditionally held on Jan. 1 each year, is a way for residents to come out, interact with and ask questions of their elected officials.

Maloney said residents can voice concerns all year but the

levee invites people to come out right at the beginning of the new year.

Hosting these kinds of events where he and the council members can hear the opinions of their residents and have discussions is important, he said.

"We need someone to sometimes bring it to our attention. We wouldn't even perhaps think about it, but certainly the members of the public have individual concerns and we encourage them to bring it to our attention."

The most common issues he hears are about snow removal, crosswalks and accessibility, something with which he can sympathize himself because he uses a cane.

There are some issues, however, that council just doesn't have jurisdiction over.

"There are a lot of issues that are not really the responsibility

of the city, but people don't know where to go with their concern or problem. We do the best we can," he said, using the examples of organized crime and last year's issues with a medical marijuana facility.

Residents sometimes express frustrations about how long it's taking for an issue to be dealt with, and Maloney said council gets frustrated by that, too. All council members can do though is continue to push things through the proper channels and try to make sure the problems don't get ignored.

Maloney said he, with the help of his assistant, does his best to keep track of all the concerns brought before council. He feels it's his duty as mayor to make sure nothing gets overlooked.

Barton@postmedia.com
Twitter: @BartonLaura



LAURA BARTON/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Port Colborne Mayor John Maloney, right, sits down for some coffee and discussions with his city's residents during his new year's levee last Sunday.

Carbon tax pain felt at the pumps

ALISON LAMLEY
Postmedia Network

Gas prices across Niagara are sitting at an average of \$1.15 a litre fuelled in part by the new cap-and-trade fee charged by the Ontario government.

"It's a bit of a sticker shock," said Dan McTeague, senior petroleum analyst with GasBuddy.com.

"Even though many knew it was coming, no one really understood what it meant."

Prices last Monday climbed by a minimum of 4.3 cents a litre across the province with

the introduction of the cap-and-trade carbon tax program.

The Kathleen Wynne government says it introduced cap-and-trade to combat climate change and reward businesses that cut greenhouse emissions.

The program is expected to generate about \$1.9 billion annually, which will be used to support projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"You can propose all you want and anticipate as a government that you'll have to raise taxes, but the public doesn't really get it until they have to pay out of their wallets, at which point the

questions start coming," said McTeague, an MP between 1993 and 2011.

"The questions are coming fast and furious and they're universally negative."

In St. Catharines, according to GasBuddy.com, motorists at Pioneer on Ontario Street could fill up for 93.9 cents last Tuesday morning while Petro-Canada on Welland Avenue had gas listed at \$1.16.

"It doesn't matter what they charge, I still have to pay it because I need to drive," said a St. Catharines man after he filled up his sedan at \$1.16 a litre at a

station on Geneva Street.

"I was going to go down to Ontario Street because there's always a few stations that have lower prices, but I didn't want to spend my time waiting in line like I did over the summer."

Last August, a price tug-of-war along the Ontario Street strip of stations had the cheapest prices in the province, with some stations offering gas in the high 80 cent range and lower.

The low prices resulted in some long lines and heated exchanges between motorists.

See GAS on A3



ALICE JOHNSON/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Gas prices climbed a minimum 4.3 cents a litre across Niagara on Monday as the Ontario government's new cap-and-trade fee took effect.

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Gas prices increase costs

GAS from A3

Last Tuesday, two stations on Ontario Street — Esso and Pioneer — were selling gas at below than average prices.

"They love to draw prices below cost to attract a lot of people," McTeague said. "It's really two major oil companies selling gas below cost to try to drive out their competitors. I just wish they'd do it at all their gas stations across Ontario."

Meanwhile, prices fluctuated across Niagara Falls. Shell on Dorchester Road, for example, was charging 116.9 cents a litre last Tuesday, while Esso on Lundy's Lane offered gas at 102.6 cents.

The average price of gas in Welland was about \$1.15 a litre.

McTeague said consumers should pay attention to the impact on diesel prices.

Under the new program, the price of a litre of diesel increased about five cents on Jan. 1.

Since so much business depends on trucks and trains to move product, that increase is likely to drive up the cost of just about everything people consume, McTeague said.

"So there's no doubt that this will have wider implications on the cost of living for ordinary individuals," he said. "It doesn't just end with transportation fuel ... everything is going to be affected by this. It's going to be a lot more expensive to live in Ontario now," he said.

— with Postmedia files
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P POSTMEDIA

I've been thinking about the Word alone

PASTOR MICHAEL MELES
Faith & St. Peter's Lutheran Churches,
Dunnville & Port Colborne

Everyone who celebrates the 500 anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation (31 October 1517) will hear something about the three great 'solas': Sola Gratia (Grace Alone), Sola Fide (Faith Alone), and Sola Scriptura (Word Alone).

Sometimes two more are added, they are, Solus Christus (Christ Alone) and Soli Deo Gloria (to God Alone be the Glory).

These statements contradict the popular Christian teaching of the day and focus back on the true, biblical, universal Christian faith. The sinner (that is, everyone) is made right with God by grace alone, through faith alone, which is understood, believed and known by the Word of God (the bible) alone. All of this is through Christ alone, so that it is clear that all glory, honour, praise and thanksgiving are due to God alone (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

"And you lie made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins ... for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; It is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast," Ephesians 2:1, 8-9.

All Christians do well to consider these statements as they relate to their faith and salvation, so that's what I'll explain in this column over the next few months.

We'll begin with Sola Scriptura, By the Word of God Alone. Many Christians in the world believe that the Bible is a dark book, filled with mystery, incomprehensible visions, violence and things ordinary human beings shouldn't look into. But God Himself, in His Word contradicts that false way of thinking. The Bible, the Word of God, "is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path," Psalm 119:105.

God tells us His Word is light, understanding and truth, and that it will remain forever (Matthew 24:35). In fact, we are commanded "as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious," 1 Peter 2:2.

The Word of God is our highest treasure and we should desire it, crave it, and inwardly digest it as a newborn baby desires, craves, inwardly digests and grows by pure mother's milk.

God Himself makes His dear children grow in the true faith through His holy Word, which we hear preached and



ALISTAIR COTTON

Priest holding bible with crucifix.

taught, and which we read, sing and pray. So God told pastor Timothy through St. Paul, "you must continue in the things which you have

learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which

are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doc-

trine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work," 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

Therefore, love God's Word. God has spoken and caused it to be written down for our learning so we may know Him, His will and what He has done and continues to do for our salvation has been given to enlighten us and bring us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). He has given it to correct us, to lead us in the way that we should go, to give us faith and so that we can, with all confidence and joy, confess what we believe.

Don't be afraid to read the Bible because it's not some dark, secret book, but it is Jesus Christ Himself (John 1:1-18), and every part of it is about Jesus and His saving work in the world all pointing to His cross and resurrection.

It's true there will be things you don't understand yet, but there's nothing wrong with that - thank God He's greater than you, and keep reading.

Talk to your pastor. Attend faithful bible studies. Listen carefully to biblical sermons and pray. God's Word and Gods Word alone is the final true authority for all doctrine and life.

Love God by loving His Word.

Fancy farm girl is making great wine

The backbone of any great wine comes from a few sources of inspiration and hard work, namely the winemaker, along with a vineyard manager or grower.

Sometimes these can be the same person, but throughout Niagara we have some incredible talent in making Niagara wines world-class.

I wanted to talk to someone about being a winemaker here in our region and figured, since her family has been farming

here for more than 200 years, who better than Sue-Ann Staff of Sue-Ann Staff Estate Winery near London.

I went to visit Staff at her farmhouse on a cold, clear day last week, where it doubles as a tasting room, retail area and showcase for the immense amount of awards her wines have garnered. Upon my arrival I was warmly greeted by an immensely happy, cheerful and huge Bernese mountain dog named, of

course, Brix. This was really a great foreshadowing into what Staff and her philosophy entails, as the atmosphere shadowed the furry joy that greeted me at the door.

Staff has been winemaking in our region, as well as consulting, for years and she recently took a keen focus on her own brand as she is now dedicated to growing her family business on the farm. Her family actually boasts two Grape Kings, awarded each

year from Grape Growers of Ontario, with her father and grandfather taking the honour, and five generations have tended the acreage leading to its wine fame today.

As I sit in her sun-drenched dining room, sipping some caffeine, talking about the wine industry, I am struck by her genuine enthusiasm and passion for the industry and winemaking.

See WINE on A7



GRACE TONDALE/SPECIAL TO THE POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Sue-Ann Staff, owner of Sue-Ann Staff Estate Winery, now home to Fancy Farm Girl wines.

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LOCAL NEWS

Winemaking is not easy

WINE FROM A4

Today there are challenges at all angles, from LCBO to changing demographics, but Staff takes it all in stride as part of the business.

We tend to see jobs such as winemaking, and being a chef, as cool and exciting, and they certainly can be at times.

The harsh reality is the work can be back-breaking, with incredible long hours, and not really much left at the end to show for it.

Staff's winery currently sits in the farm's garage where she has used work skills at Teris to fit in fermentation tanks, barrels and bottles all amazingly in the same room, along with space to cater weddings.

It has been 16 years since Staff graduated from her winemaking program in Australia (I

will forgive her for not coming to Niagara College as we hadn't started yet) and her fierce pride of place has kept her here in Niagara building our industry each and every day, which has included stints of teaching our students at the college.

As we sit and go through her wines in a tasting, her voice begins to race and her adrenalin clearly rises as immense pride shows on her sleeve and in her bottle.

There is a great range of easy-drinking wines to more austere and focused gems such as her Roberts Block Riesling or Cabernet Franc.

The recent success of her second-tier wines named Fancy Farm Girl wines in not only Ontario but other provinces is a testament to Staff's personality and love of wine.

The goal of these wines is not just to build her brand and sales, but also to provide some fun and love into wine drinkers' choices, and to not take ourselves, or winemaking, too seriously.

Her plans are to grow the winery on the farm and design a place that not only is practical for the business, but also a place people want to come and enjoy wine as much as she does. And that is a high bar indeed.

— Craig has been in the food and beverage industry for three decades as a chef, restaurateur, professor, international competitor and now dean of the Canadian Food and Wine Institute at Niagara College. His passion for all things food and wine has led him to Niagara to lead the institute to become the world's foremost educator in fermentation sciences and culinary arts.

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LOCAL NEWS

Maloney calls 2016 'good year for the community'

LAURA BARTON
Postmedia Network

As 2017 begins, Port Colborne Mayor John Maloney takes the time to reflect on what has happened in the city over the past year.

"All in all, I think it's been a very good year for the community," he said.

"Steady development and laying the foundations for increased development in the future years."

Residential and economic development, something Maloney said was among his campaign promises, is one of the things he's most proud of.

Although he said it's not necessarily something that he's doing first hand, seeing that the development from his position as mayor is a positive.

There has been growth in the industrial sector as the company Allied Marine and Industrial moved to its new location, retaining and creating new jobs.

There has also been a buildup as residential neighbourhoods such as Westwood Estates has nearly sold out its first wave of new homes and will start selling for the second phase in 2017.

"The freeze on develop-

ment charges made a big impact on residential dwellings," Maloney said of council's move to encourage more residential developers to come to the area.

Other things that Maloney and his team of council members have been able to check off their list for this year are updating water meters and installing LED streetlights for better efficiency, a new centre of operation for the city's administration and engineering departments, updating playground equipment, and an increase in tourism.

He also said, "It was a good year for the marina. Best year yet, actually. It was a very hot

summer and beautiful fall."

The extension of the Showboat Festival Theatre and updates to Roselawn Centre are also big pluses, he said. A volunteer committee has been working on renovations and repairs to the property.

"Roselawn is just a hidden jewel in the community and we don't want to lose it. It's a great facility to have."

But not all has been positive in Port Colborne this year, as the city dealt with the robbery of a medical marijuana facility that shook residents over the summer and the more recent fatal fire on Nickel Street that claimed four lives. Maloney said residents and emergency

personnel will need time to cope with the tragic fire, but that in times of crisis, the community comes together.

"When things get serious, and the people have to come together, they do come together."

The support of the community is something he's experienced personally when he suffered a stroke in February.

He said he's now "back 100 per cent," but to this day people still stop him in the street or at the store to see how he's doing, a gesture for which he's very much appreciative.

"Obviously everyone at Christmas time is already friendly and joyful, but I can't

go into any store or down the street that people come and say, 'How are you feeling?' And it's a sincere 'how are you feeling?'"

Maloney feels that communal support is what makes Port Colborne a great city in which to live.

Heading into the new year, the plan is to continue to strive for positive change in the community and expand "all the things that make Port Colborne good."

"We'll deal with the negatives when and if they happen, but we can work on positives throughout the year"

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New year baby among firsts

LAURA BARTON
Postmedia Network

Fatima Ibrahim and her family have experienced a lot of firsts since coming to Canada as refugees in March last year.

Seeing snow for the first time was a notable mention. She said her three-year-old son Yousif Friegoun's eyes went wide when he first saw the flakes.

"Canada is different weather than Africa," she said of her original home in Sudan. "The first time we saw the snow — wow!"

Another first for Yousif is a brother, who happens to be Welland's first baby of 2017, born at Niagara Health System's maternity ward at St. Catharines hospital.

Abdulrahman Friegoun, named after Ibrahim's late father, was welcomed to this country and the world at 9:03 a.m. on Jan. 1. He weighed

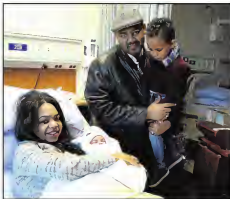
1n at seven pounds and 11.3 ounces.

While mom was recovering in bed, Yousif was more than a little upset, shedding tears and not wanting to be in the room. Dad Mohamed Friegoun stepped out to comfort his oldest son.

"He's very angry," Ibrahim said.

Her friend Reshaa Mohammed, who helped translate for Ibrahim, said, "He's very close to his mom. When she goes to her friends and she holds their babies, he's always crying. So it's going to be a challenge for her. For him, too."

Ibrahim said she plans to turn to her support system of friends to help her with her new baby. It's going to be different having a baby in a new country away from her other friends and her mom and siblings, although Mohammed said she will be there to help Ibrahim along the way.



Mom Fatima Ibrahim holds her baby boy Abdulrahman Friegoun, the first Welland baby of 2017. Her husband Mohamed Friegoun holds their three-year-old son Yousif Friegoun. Yousif stares intently at his brother for the first time in this picture.

She came to Canada in 2008, and was Ibrahim's first friend here. With Mohammed's trans-

lating, Ibrahim said, "I'm excited to raise him here. It's going to be better for him to be raised in Canada."

She's excited to get him home too, where she's more comfortable and can work on the family dynamic.

Yousif is angry with her now, but she hopes to learn how to help the brothers get along. She plans to spend lots of time with both children so they don't feel left out.

"My son was the only baby for three years" Ibrahim said without translation.

Yousif did show some interest in his baby brother when the family gathered together for a picture. While held up in his dad's arms, he stared down for the first time at little Abdulrahman nestled quietly in mom's arms.

Ibrahim smiled as she said her newborn was going to be a "famous man now" because he's the first baby of

the year.

He's in good company. Sarah Shang is the first Niagara Falls baby of 2017, arriving at 6:59 a.m. to parents Chun and Guanchao Shang.

And Sarah wasn't just the first Niagara Falls baby, she was first for the entire region, weighing in at seven pounds, 1.9 ounces.

Sandy Baker, a 25-year charge nurse said last Sunday was "a slow day." She said the hospital averages about eight births per day.

Most years, the new year baby is delivered well before sunrise.

In this case, a mere minute was the difference — a baby was born at 11:59 p.m. Dec. 31.

— with files from John Law

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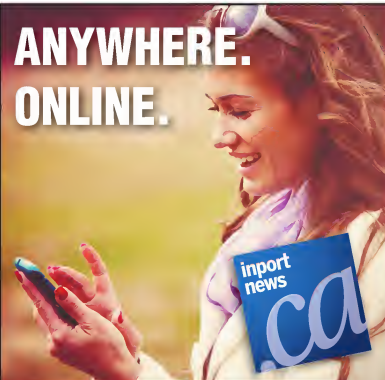
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Wainfleet following new road map in 2017

ALLAN BENNER
Postmedia Network

With a new strategic plan in place, Wainfleet Mayor April Jeffs is looking forward to implementing it in the year to come.

"Things are coming together for 2017," Jeffs said during the township's new year's levee, held Sunday afternoon at Concessi's Long Beach Market and Diner.

Aspects of that plan, such as improved communication with residents, are already being implemented.

But Jeffs said there is still room for improvement.

For instance, she said she'd like to compile a database of email addresses for residents to keep people up to date.

"It's little things like that. It doesn't sound like a lot but it does, I think, make a big difference," she said.

Jeffs also hopes to continue with Infrastructure Improvements in 2017, pending approval of the 2017 budget being developed under the guidance of the township's new treasurer, Adam Cross.

"We're hoping to have another good budget, and I'm pretty confident there will be an infrastructure levy included in it this year," she

mayor said. "That's meant a lot of positive response from the community to see us putting money away for those types of things."

Continued on next page



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LOCAL NEWS

Economic development still important in 2017

From previous page

Economic development will remain a priority, as well.

Jeffs said she had been working with the township's former chief administrative officer visiting businesses throughout Wainfleet, but the initiative stopped due to staff changes.

"That's something I'd like to start again. It was really good, even if we spoke about other things going on in the town it was a great way to get a different perspective," she said.

Jeffs is also eager to learn of Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority plans regarding Wainfleet properties such as wetlands and campgrounds.

"We want to promote recreation, but we want to do it in a way that has a minimal impact on residents," she said. "I'm excited about that, because I feel like we're finally tackling it."

A highlight of 2017 for Wainfleet could be a celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary.

Jeffs said a member of Wainfleet

Historical Society was first to suggest a township-wide celebration for the sesquicentennial. The idea was later discussed by councillors, who asked operations manager Richard Nan and township staff to put together a few ideas for a local celebration.

"We definitely want to do something to celebrate Canada's 150th, and hopefully continue it," she said.

Wainfleet is one of very few municipalities that doesn't have a Canada Day event. And although fireworks can be a big expense for the township, she said it could be done if partners come on board to help pay for it.

Concessi's Long Beach Market and Diner closed for the season in December, but reopened to accommodate Sunday's levee. The business will reopen for the season in April, and the restaurant will re-open by the Victoria Day weekend.

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